PRESS BRIEF

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES, 2026

From Waste Disposal to Resource Recovery — A Shared Responsibility

1. Background and Applicability

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, has notified the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 vide Notification No. S.O. 388(E) dated 27 January 2026, framed under Sections 3, 6 and 25 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Rules came into force with effect from 1 April 2026, superseding the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

The 2026 Rules introduce a strengthened framework based on source segregation, scientific processing, circular economy principles, Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR), digital monitoring, accountability and reduction of landfilling.

The Rules apply to both urban and rural local bodies, and to the full range of waste generators — domestic, institutional and commercial — including government and private establishments, educational institutions, Railways, airports, ports, defence establishments, hotels, hospitals, markets and other non-residential waste generators (Rule 2).

2. Four-Stream Segregation at Source

The foundational requirement of the 2026 Rules is the mandatory segregation of waste at source into four streams, marking a shift away from mixed-waste collection towards segregated collection and resource recovery. Rule 5(1)(b) requires every waste generator to segregate and store waste in four separate streams and hand it over to authorised waste pickers or collectors as directed by the local authority.

- Wet Waste — kitchen, food, vegetable, fruit, meat, flower and other biodegradable waste.
- Dry Waste — recyclable and non-recyclable dry material such as paper, plastic, metal, glass, wood and rubber.
- Sanitary Waste — used diapers, sanitary napkins/towels, tampons, condoms, incontinence sheets and similar waste.
- Special Care Waste — discarded paint and pesticide containers, CFLs/bulbs, tube lights, expired medicines, broken mercury thermometers, waste batteries, used needles/syringes and contaminated gauze.

> *"Segregation at source is the starting point of scientific waste management. Mixed waste cannot be effectively recycled, composted or processed."*

3. Duties of Every Waste Generator

Under Rule 5(1), every waste generator — whether a household, institution or establishment — is required, among other things, to:

- prevent or reduce environmental pollution caused by solid waste;
- segregate and store waste in the four prescribed streams and hand it over to authorised collectors/waste pickers;
- securely wrap sanitary waste and place it in the designated stream;
- keep Construction & Demolition waste and horticulture/garden waste separately;
- pay applicable solid waste management user fees and maintain suitable storage containers; and
- ensure appropriate waste management during events and gatherings.

Rule 5(1)(f) further prohibits every waste generator from throwing, burning or burying solid waste on streets or open public spaces, or disposing of it in drains or water bodies.

DO NOT throw waste in drains • burn waste in the open • dump on roadsides • mix sanitary/special-care waste with other waste • hand over unsegregated waste

4. Bulk Waste Generators (BWGs) — Extended Responsibility

The Rules define a Bulk Waste Generator as an entity meeting at least one of the following thresholds:

- building floor area of 20,000 sq. m. or more;
- water consumption of 40,000 litres/day or more; or
- solid waste generation of 100 kg/day or more.

The definition covers institutional and commercial establishments, residential societies and specified facilities such as schools, colleges, hotels, hospitals, malls, markets, stadiums, hostels, convention centres, tourist spots and marriage/banquet halls.

BWG Action points — Every Bulk Waste Generator Must:

- REGISTER on the centralised online portal through the concerned Local Body;
- SEGREGATE waste into four streams at source;
- PROCESS WET WASTE through on-site composting, biomethanation or other approved technology (mandatory for new BWGs under Rule 6; existing BWGs unable to do so may seek exemption from the Local Body);
- HAND OVER dry, sanitary and special-care waste to the Local Body or an authorised agency;
- FULFIL Extended Bulk Waste Generator Responsibility (EBWGR) for wet-waste processing and sound management of other streams;
- PROCURE EBWGR certificates where applicable, for waste managed through authorised arrangements;
- ENGAGE ONLY registered entities for waste collection/processing; and
- FILE ANNUAL RETURNS on the centralised portal by 30 June every year.

EBWGR introduces accountability and traceability of waste from the point of generation to processing, with certificates generated by Local Bodies on the basis of waste collected, transported and sent to registered processors or recyclers, recorded on the centralised online portal.

5. Resource Recovery, Waste Hierarchy and Scientific Disposal

The Rules clearly distinguish processing/recovery from final disposal, and prioritise waste management in the following order of preference:

PREVENTION → REDUCTION → REUSE → RECYCLING → RECOVERY → SCIENTIFIC DISPOSAL

Wet waste is to be processed through composting, biomethanation or similar biological treatment; dry waste is to be channelised through Material Recovery Facilities for recycling. Non-recyclable waste with a calorific value of 1,500 kcal/kg or more is not to be landfilled and must instead be used for energy recovery or as Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). Under Rule 14, sanitary landfills are reserved for residual and specified inert/non-recoverable waste; wet waste and construction & demolition waste may not be disposed of in sanitary landfills.

Legacy Waste and Dumpsites

Under Rule 15, existing dumpsites are to be geographically mapped and assessed by 31 October 2026, with legacy waste biomined and bioremediated through time-bound action plans. Fresh waste cannot be disposed of on legacy dumpsites where biomining/bioremediation is under way — the objective being to move from open dumping towards Segregation → Recovery → Processing → Scientific disposal of only residual waste.

6. Digital Monitoring and Transparency

Under Rule 16, the Central Pollution Control Board is to establish a Centralised Online Portal for registration, reporting and annual returns. The portal will provide information on waste generated, collected, processed, recycled, sent to landfill

and on sanitary landfill facilities, legacy dumpsites and audit outcomes, at the national, State and district levels — with such data placed in the public domain.

7. Environmental Compensation

Rule 17 provides for Environmental Compensation on the "polluter pays principle" for non-compliance, including failure to register, submission of false information or forged documents, and violations relating to collection, segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of waste. Compensation is levied by the concerned State Pollution Control Board/Pollution Control Committee in accordance with CPCB guidelines; Rule 17(5) also permits action under Section 15 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

8. Supreme Court Directions

Implementation of the 2026 Rules is being monitored by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Bhopal Municipal Corporation v. Dr. Subhash C. Pandey & Ors., Civil Appeal No. 6174 of 2023. In its order dated 19 February 2026, the Court described the 2026 Rules as comprehensive and directed that its orders apply "not only to the Bhopal Municipal Corporation but also to the entire country," directing, inter alia, that:

- District Collectors oversee establishment, execution and handling of municipal solid waste within their jurisdictions;
- Local bodies fix and communicate an outer time-limit for 100% compliance, and undertake infrastructure audits;
- Pollution Control Boards expedite infrastructure for four-stream segregation and communicate the Rules to identified BWGs; and
- Legacy dumpsites be addressed through separate, time-bound action plans, backed by physical and digital infrastructure.

> *"The legislature has done its job, and it is now for the executive and the citizens to implement and follow the mandate laid down by the Parliament."*

In a subsequent order dated 18 August 2026, the Court underlined that responsibility is universal, asking "whose task is it?" for successful implementation, and holding that "it shall be the responsibility of all contributors to Solid Waste to manage and be part of the Rules." District Collectors were directed to identify all BWGs within six weeks and to inform them of consequences of non-compliance, which may include temporary disconnection of water or electricity supply, restorable on submission of a compliance certificate. The Court also directed greater participation of elected representatives and accounting of waste "generated, accounted for and unaccounted for."

9. Role of Local Bodies

Urban and Rural Local Bodies are central to implementation. Their responsibilities include door-to-door collection of segregated waste; appropriate transportation; establishment and operation of processing facilities and Material Recovery Facilities; management of sanitary, special-care and legacy waste; prevention and remediation of garbage-vulnerable points; registration and monitoring of BWGs; public awareness/IEC activities; and enforcement of applicable bye-laws.

10. Message to Citizens

Effective solid waste management cannot be achieved by government agencies alone. Every citizen can contribute by following five basic principles:

SEGREGATE — STORE — HAND OVER — REDUCE — DO NOT LITTER

- Segregate: keep wet, dry, sanitary and special-care waste separate.
- Store: keep waste in appropriate containers until collection.
- Hand over: give segregated waste only to authorised collectors/agencies.

- Reduce: cut unnecessary consumption and avoid waste generation.
- Do not litter: never throw, burn or bury waste in public places, drains or water bodies.

11. Message to Institutions, Businesses and Bulk Waste Generators

Schools, colleges, offices, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, markets, shopping complexes, residential societies and government establishments are requested to treat solid waste management as a daily operational responsibility, not merely a sanitation activity. Establishments should assess whether they qualify as Bulk Waste Generators and, where applicable, comply fully with Rule 6 — with particular attention to registration, four-stream segregation, decentralised wet-waste processing, authorised collection and recycling, EBWGR compliance, record-keeping and timely submission of returns.

12. Message from the Assam Pollution Control Board

The Assam Pollution Control Board appeals to all citizens, institutions, businesses, Local Bodies and Bulk Waste Generators to actively participate in implementing the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026. The Government of Assam has issued directions for implementation of the Rules and compliance with the Supreme Court's directions, covering infrastructure audits, four-stream segregation, BWG compliance, and digital reporting and monitoring. The success of the Rules depends on a complete chain of responsibility:

SOURCE SEGREGATION → SEPARATE COLLECTION → SCIENTIFIC PROCESSING → RESOURCE RECOVERY → MINIMUM LANDFILLING

Solid Waste Management is Everyone's Responsibility.

Segregate at Source. Process Waste Scientifically. Keep Waste out of Drains and Water Bodies. Stop Open Burning and Dumping. Make Waste a Resource.